

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

No. 470 Fifth Week Michaelmas Term 2024

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘scrutiny’ as: “critical gaze, close investigation, examination into details; official examination of votes cast in election to check their validity or accuracy of counting.”

Cambridge has a Board of Scrutiny, established in 1995. Its website explains its function as follows: to “ensure the accountability of the Council (and through it of the other central bodies) to the Regent House [Cambridge’s equivalent to Oxford’s Congregation].... It can be thought of as an internal watchdog body, analogous to the relationship between the Public Accounts Committee and the government, ensuring transparency and accountability in all aspects of the University’s operations.... Does the Board make a genuine difference to the way the University carries out its operations? The short answer is yes. It is at the heart of the University’s governance, and interacts with the key members of the University’s senior leadership. The Board seeks to conduct its business in a constructive way, interacting with both individuals and the University Council to develop mutually supportive outcomes on behalf of the Regent House.” In an article below Gill Evans outlines some of the issues most recently taken up by the Board (their Annual Reports are publicly available via Google). In Cambridge there is a quite separate Audit Committee.

Whereas scrutiny and audit are clearly assigned to different governance bodies in Cambridge Oxford has an Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The Regulations governing the committee are copied in Reminders below. “[T]he committee defines scrutiny as the process of structured inquiry or investigation into failures or alleged failures of the University’s operations.” The committee’s Annual Reports are available (behind SSO) on the University website. There is much talk of audit (internal and exter-

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nal), assurance, compliance, value for money, accountabilities, operating efficiency and risk management. But scrutiny functions are not mentioned as such.

Two questions arise. Even allowing for the opacity of the terminology, the impression created is that the committee is overwhelming concerned with audit. Secondly, the Annual Reports are short – the most recent one being 7 pages long – and amount to listings of topics covered rather than any substantive detailing of the complex themes themselves. If this is the means by which members of Congregation are meant to reach an understanding of the fundamental governance functions of audit and scrutiny it is woefully inadequate. To the great majority of University staff the committee as well as its functions will not only be incomprehensible but, in practice, invisible.

What then does scrutiny amount to in Oxford? Can it be said to happen at all or in any way that might match up to what is clear and transparent in the work of Cambridge’s Board of Scrutiny? If there is no separation of the two functions in Oxford’s governance structures the effectiveness of scrutiny will necessarily be open to doubt.

* * *

One consequence of the invisibility of the work of central committees is the stifling of the democratic governance of which Oxford is so proud. If University staff are so far removed from adequate information about the activities of such an important committee as Audit and Scrutiny as they are, how can they scrutinise scrutiny? More generally the effect of invisibility is disengagement and ultimately disenchantment with the system.

Last week’s “Elections by Congregation” section in

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...and much more

the *Gazette* provided powerful evidence of the unwillingness – or inability – of members of Congregation to exercise their participative responsibilities within our democratic governance structures. Among the vacant posts for which members of Congregation were eligible were three for the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. Given that no candidates had come forward by the due date these lapsed vacancies will, as a consequence, have to be filled by nominations made by the Vice-Chancellor and the Proctors. The implications are obvious. Those ‘Congregation-elected’ members of the committee will not have been selected through open canvassing and voting by Congregation and perforce are likely to be ‘establishment’ figures known to central management as people willing and able to devote the time needed to serve on a committee that has to oversee a large number of highly technical and sensitive matters.

Also on the list of vacancies were eleven positions on the Statute XII Pool for Constituting Panels. You may be forgiven for needing further clarification.

The Panels are symbolic of our system of equals as members of Congregation, the supreme legislative body of the University. A Panel is the group of Congregation-elected Congregation members chosen – having been randomly selected from the larger Pool – to sit in judgement in a variety of disciplinary and appeal cases held under Statute XII, the statute that defines the employment conditions of academics and higher grade academic-related employees. The Panel is in effect a jury

acting on behalf of its peers. For the first time one such Panel is currently deciding the fate of a member of Congregation facing the imminent prospect of being made compulsorily redundant.

In the current round of elections to the Pool only one person had put their name forward in MPLS, leaving four positions vacant.

* * *

As we were so starkly reminded during the recent US elections the way in which the selection of candidates reach the ballot is even more important than the final vote itself. The paucity of candidates for fundamentally important committees in Oxford indicates not just failure of engagement but signals a growing lack of concern among staff for the well-being of our institution. I suggest that the primary source of all this is the secretiveness with which central policies and practices are conducted. General democratic paralysis and disillusionment are the inevitable result.

For effective democratic governance committees need new, diverse and contrarian ideas freely expressed. At a time when Congregation itself is moribund and hamstrung by archaic rules scrutiny needs to be in the hands of a body that lives up to the word.

T.J.H

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present (“on the floor”) at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>
Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.
The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.
Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).



Reminders



The Regulations governing Oxford's Audit and Scrutiny committee cover its two functions separately as follows, 8.7 covering its audit function and 8.8 its scrutiny role:

8.7. The committee shall provide independent assurance to assist Council in fulfilling Council's responsibilities for ensuring the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's arrangements for risk management; control; governance; compliance with the legal and regulatory framework the University operates within (this includes the culture and behaviour that is prevalent within the institution and arrangements that can affect reputation); ethical and other behaviours, including whistleblowing; sustainability and economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money); and the management and quality assurance of data submitted to the Higher Education Statistics Agency ('HESA'), the Student Loans Company, and to the Office for Students and the other funding bodies. In particular, the committee shall:

8.8. In respect of its scrutiny function:

- (1) the committee defines scrutiny as the process of structured inquiry or investigation into failures or alleged failures of the University's operations;
 - (2) the committee shall itself determine how and when to exercise this function;
 - (3) in exercising this function, the committee may call for any investigation that it considers necessary and may call any individual or for any document or documents it considers relevant to any such investigation;
 - (4) the committee shall receive and consider requests for scrutiny reviews submitted by any member of Congregation;
 - (5) the committee shall undertake scrutiny reviews at the request of Council;
 - (6) save in respect of any scrutiny review that the committee considers requires immediate reference to Council, the committee shall publish on the Oxford intranet within one month of acceptance by the committee a summary of any scrutiny review undertaken under regulation 8.8(4) or (5), or a summary of why such a requested review was considered unnecessary;
- (7) save for those reports which the committee considers shall remain confidential (for example those concerning individuals) and for any report referred to Council, the committee shall make available for consultation by any member of Congregation by arrangement with the secretary of the committee the full text of any scrutiny report for which a summary has been published under regulation 8.8(6).
- 8.9. (1) Each year, at the same meeting at which Council is asked to approve the University's financial statements, the committee shall report to Council and thereafter to Congregation and to the Office for Students (where required) on its activity over the relevant financial year.
- (4) In addition to drawing attention to significant issues that have arisen out of the committee's work over the year in question, the report shall include the committee's opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's arrangements regarding:
 - (a) risk management, to include the accuracy of the statement of internal control and risk management included with the annual statement of accounts;
 - (b) control;
 - (c) governance;
 - (d) compliance with the legal and regulatory framework the University operates within (this includes the culture and behaviour that is prevalent within the institution and arrangements that can affect reputation);
 - (e) ethical and other behaviours, including whistleblowing;
 - (f) sustainability and value for money; and
 - (g) the management and quality assurance of data submitted to HESA, the Student Loans Company, the Office for Students and other bodies.
 - (5) The committee's annual report is additional to any other reports the committee considers it appropriate to submit to Council during the year.

The Audit and Scrutiny Committee is now to be found in Part 8 of Council Regulations of 2002, among Committees Reporting to Council

The University's Governance Structure

The University has a clear governance structure that comprises both Congregation and Council

Congregation, the ultimate legislative body of the University, is composed of virtually all academic staff and certain research support staff, administrators and librarians. It has responsibility for considering major policy issues submitted to it by Council or members of Congregation; elects members to certain University bodies, including Council and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee; and approves changes or additions to the University's Statutes and Regulations, which define the governance structure.

Council, composed of members of Congregation elected by Congregation, ex officio members and lay members, is (subject to the provisions of the Statutes) responsible for the administration of the University and for the management of its finances and assets. It is also responsible to the Office for Students for meeting the conditions of registration. Council meets regularly and is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

The University's principles of governance are: defining policies and setting objectives for securing resources, the appointment of senior staff sufficient to meet the objectives and monitoring of progress towards those objectives. Council has stewardship, under Congregation, of the University's affairs and ensures that suitable processes are in place for the management of the University's business.

Council is advised by a range of committees, including five main committees that report directly to Council on core business: the Education Committee, the General Purposes Committee, the People Committee, the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee and the Research and Innovation Committee. Financial and audit committees reporting directly to Council include the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, the Finance Committee and the Investment Committee.

The Education Committee is responsible for defining and keeping under review the educational philosophy, policy and standards of the collegiate University, and for the oversight of activities relating to teaching, learning and assessment.

The General Purposes Committee advises Council on policy in respect of issues or activities which are university-wide and transcend the remit of the other main committees of Council or other specialist committees as

appropriate. Its remit includes responsibility for strategic issues relating to risk management.

The People Committee has oversight of the development and review of employment policies, staff relations and all personnel matters.

The Planning and Resource Allocation Committee advises Council on planning, budgets and forecasts, resource allocation and other financial arrangements, and monitors performance against plans and budgets.

The Research and Innovation Committee advises Council on policy and planning issues relating to research – in particular, those aspects of the Strategic Plan that relate to the University's research activities, and reviews the progress made against the Plan. The committee facilitates the preparation for external reviews of the University's research, and co-ordinates the gathering of data for such reviews. The committee is responsible for the University's policies and procedures for costing and pricing of research, including full economic cost recovery, risks associated with research, and maintains a register of international research collaboration agreements to which the University is a party.

The remit of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee includes responsibility for the appointment of the external auditors and internal audit service, agreeing the nature and scope of their work and their fees. The committee reviews the effectiveness of the risk management, internal control and governance arrangements, considers the annual financial statements and oversees the policy on fraud and irregularity. The committee also receives reports from the Value for Money Committee and the Audit Committee of the Press. Whilst senior officers attend meetings of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee as necessary, they are not members of the committee.

The Finance Committee is responsible, under Council, for the review of the annual financial statements of the University and of the Press, for banking arrangements and for the review and publication of financial regulations and procedures.

The Investment Committee is responsible, under Council, for the management of the University's investment portfolio.

This text is the outline of University Governance on the University website - ed

Debating 'values'

Oxford Magazine is most grateful to Diego Sanchez-Ancochea for agreeing to answer a few key questions on the subject of shared values.

As 'Associate Head for People' in the Social Sciences division your primary interest is, I assume, the promoting of good relations and wellbeing among staff. You kindly agreed to discuss aspects of your objectives in this respect, particularly with a view to encouraging wide debate and

consensus-building on a potentially divisive area in University policy. At the recent Professional Services Annual Conference you chaired a discussion on the University's 'People Strategy, 2024-27' in which the subject of values came up. As a power point put it, the aim here is:

"To create shared Oxford values to articulate a fair and supportive environment where every individual feels valued, empowered and accountable."

The desired target and the route to implementation were then described as follows:

“Our values are clear to everyone, and they integrate them into their daily work, insights derived from analysis of casework data.”

Granted that these formulations were necessarily brief it would make sense to start by unpacking the key elements; some are presumably more or less self-evident (we all have values personal and shared) but how would you define “values” in the context of the University’s purpose, targets and governance?

I should first clarify that everything I say is my own opinion and does not reflect a policy position of either the Social Science Division or the University.

So when I define values, it is my own definition and not one I have discussed with others in the University. I would define values as a set of principles of behaviour that are shared within the University. They contribute to create the type of supportive environment that the People Strategy aims to promote; they allow everyone to feel respected and valued.

To be more specific, why is this policy needed, what type of problem does it aim to address and can you give concrete examples of such problems?

The goal is to make explicit the set of principles that are currently implicit and not sufficiently discussed. Why is this important? Because we should all commit to treat others with respect and to promote an environment where everyone feels included. And we should have the option to discuss deeply (as academics do) what is needed to secure that kind of environment and what principles we should all share.

I am sure you know many instances in which some individuals within the University have been disrespectful to others. There are many instances, for example, of rude emails, or of academics treating supportive staff unkindly or examples of racism and discrimination against minority groups. We want to make sure we create a culture in which these behaviours are not tolerated and sharing a set of values can help to achieve this goal.

Surely nobody is going to disagree that we want a “fair and supportive environment” and that everybody should feel “valued and empowered” but how does accountability fit in? Is this hinting at the right to challenge behaviour or conduct of colleagues, especially perhaps line managers? Mention of “casework” implies as much and raises the question of whether there is an iron disciplinary fist within the velvet glove here.

Maybe everyone agrees about the need to create a “fair and supportive environment” where everyone feels respected, but this does not mean that everyone behaves in a way which is consistent with such an environment. If we have a set of shared values, we can use them to demand

proper behaviour from others. This is not a tool for line managers only but for everyone.

As I understand it you would argue that it is necessary to have a published University-wide statement of values. Many departments already have their own such statements so would the statement you advocate trump them and might it not potentially conflict with elements in the existing statements?

Our shared values should result from a University-wide conversation where we tackle complicated issues such as the relationship between equality, diversity and inclusion and Freedom of Speech. The statement of values that different departments have can be a great starting point for this discussion. I am sure that when we analyse the statement of values of different departments, we will see that there is a lot of common ground. So I don’t see a conflict but an opportunity to create something that goes beyond single departments and is shared by everyone.

In the ‘People’ section of the University’s current Strategic Plan it says; “We will foster an inclusive culture that promotes equality of opportunity, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all our staff and students are respected.” Does this not deal with the problems you identified earlier? Is it not true that to be more specific and prescriptive risks disagreements on interpretation and in implementation – and ultimately might this not be seen as infringing an individual’s rights to express their own values under Freedom of Speech provisions?

In many ways, this question reveals why we need a set of shared values that focus on respect, fairness, equality, diversity and inclusion. Nobody should use the Freedom of Speech provisions to disrespect others, to interrupt people when they are talking, to make people feel inferior. It is important that we share minimum standards to avoid this kind of behaviour. The word ‘minimum’ here is important; we obviously want to be conscious of different cultures and ways of being. But surely we need to be clear about the minimum standards that everyone should share.

Are there possible alternative strategies to the tablet of stone approach; for example many departments display notices urging – and even requiring – consideration and respect in interactions with colleagues ... and leave it at that?

Requiring consideration and respect in interactions with colleagues will be easier if we all agree that this is part of our shared values. Creating a culture of belonging will also be easier if we agree on a set of principles that are common to everyone. Again, these should not be a top-down imposition, but should come out of a University-wide conversation in which we define the set of minimum standards that include respect, equality and inclusion and also academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Audit and Scrutiny in Oxford and Cambridge

G.R.EVANS

Oxford created its present Audit and Scrutiny Committee having rejected a proposal to follow a structure similar to Cambridge's Board of Scrutiny. In a Topic of Concern Discussion in June 2017 on what it should 'scrutinise' in the coming year there was a reminder that 'the original suggestion was that we have a separate board for scrutiny, like they do in Cambridge'. For 'Audit and Scrutiny' there was to be a 'remit so that members of the Congregation could suggest things to be scrutinised', and 'a short version' of the report 'put on the web', with the full version available to be consulted by members of Congregation in Wellington Square, with mentions of its availability published in the *Gazette*.¹

As regards scrutiny the great contrast between Oxford and Cambridge lies in the difference between the transparency of their findings. At one time – but no longer – the *Gazette* published summaries of the Committee's findings and Notices to remind interested members of Congregation to ask to read them in full in an office in Wellington Square, though they were not allowed to take copies away. Oxford's committee 'shall make available for consultation by any member of Congregation by arrangement with the secretary of the committee the full text of any scrutiny report for which a summary has been published under regulation 8.8(6)'. Most recently there were full reports online (on the intranet) for the last three years and a 'summary' for 2019-20.² Also listed online are the 'opinions' accepted by Audit and Scrutiny at each of its four meetings a year, usually in the form of an 'executive summary'.³ However the *Gazette* does not publish a regular reminder to explore the latest published findings of Audit and Scrutiny.

The most significant difference between the two universities lies in how the two roles of audit and scrutiny are clearly separated in Cambridge but combined in Oxford. In both universities there is a legal requirement to have an Audit Committee. The question arises: to what extent has Audit obscured Scrutiny in Oxford?

Cambridge's Audit Committee and its Board of Scrutiny are fundamentally different in their membership as committees. Audit is the only University committee with a majority of members external to the University. Scrutiny's membership comprises 'eight elected members of the Regent House (of which two have been members for ten years or less) together with the two Proctors and the two Pro-Proctors'. Their names are published,⁴ with election to the Board taking place beginning with a Notice in the *Reporter*.

Cambridge's Board of Scrutiny simply publishes its *Annual Report* in full in the *Reporter*, explaining what it has considered and making a series of Recommendations. The *Annual Report* is listed in the Contents of the *Reporter* on the week when it is published. A Discussion

of the *Report* follows on the next available Tuesday with remarks published in the *Reporter* the following week. The entire content of the *Reporter* from 1997-8 when it was first published online may be searched by word or phrase in a moment.⁵

The Board of Scrutiny has reached its 29th *Annual Report*, published in the *Reporter* on 23 October.⁶ The Board of Scrutiny did not settle to this yearly task without some controversy, as its *Third Report* explained in 1998. By November 1997 a draft set of regulations for it had been rejected by the Council and sent away for re-drafting. Not until March 1998 was a revised version considered and then further revisions were proposed. Entirely new objections concerning possible overlap with the roles of Audit Committee now surfaced. At each stage, the Board of Scrutiny protested, it had:

*'co-operated in the re-drafting and tried to accommodate the Council's concerns. In April 1998, agreement was reached on a third version of the draft Ordinances. The Board can only hope that, by early June, the Council will have given their official approval to what, six months previously, had seemed to us a matter for formal enactment of agreed principles.'*⁷

As a member of Cambridge's Council at the time I remember discussions at its meetings during which it was suggested that the Board of Scrutiny was proving to be dangerously critical. Some members wanted no further *Reports*, but Scrutiny has steadily continued to 'report' down the years and is now firmly established under Statute A, VII. To remove it would require Privy Council approval as well as a Grace.

The Board of Scrutiny is fully independent. As one of the committees 'reporting' to the Council as well as to the University, it finds itself in a conversation each year, both with the Council and in Discussions of its Reports. The Council's response to the 28th *Report* of 2023 was published on 24 January 2024⁸ covering the points Scrutiny had raised along with concerns expressed in the Discussion of the *Report* on 8 November 2023.⁹

The new *Report of the Board of Scrutiny* came up for Discussion on 5 November with remarks to be published too late for comment here. This year Scrutiny is concerned about 'silos', with 'duplication of roles and responsibilities at the centre, Schools and Faculties/ Departments' resulting in 'too many silos' and 'not enough co-ordination, for example when it comes to education and teaching'.

Part of the difficulty is the disjunction between the University and its Colleges. Without a counterpart to Oxford's system of conjoint appointments Cambridge's academics may be employed as University Teaching Officers (UTOs) or as Fellows of Colleges, sometimes but

separately as both. These are distinct employments and UTOs may choose not to have colleges at all.¹⁰ The Board has ‘reviewed a broad range of areas related to the provision of education and education services in the University this year, with a specific focus on the relationship between the University and the Colleges’.

The controversy over the Colleges’ role in appointing supervisors led by ‘Justice4CollegeSupervisors4’¹¹ and a threatened boycott by supervisors, had ‘exposed’, says Scrutiny, ‘some of the siloed thinking in the University that saw the provision of supervisions as simply a College matter’. The Board was:

‘pleased to see the establishment by the Council of the Review of Teaching as partial fulfilment of the Board’s recommendation in its previous Report to ‘establish a review, with representation from the Colleges’ Standing Committee, to produce a strategy for facilitating the Colleges’ task of arranging supervisions’.

It was also ‘heartened to hear that the University alongside the Colleges plan to develop an education strategy for undergraduate studies across the collegiate University over the course of the next term’. However, its ambitions were narrow, for this ‘Review of Teaching’ to ‘consider methods of increasing the supply of supervisions rather than, as at present, seeing this in terms of limiting the demand for supervisors by increasing the average number of students in each supervision’.

The Board referred to the *Annual Report of the Council* for the academic year 2022–23, which had ‘set out five main elements’ of an emerging ‘People Strategy’ to cover ‘recruitment and offer; career progression and retention; culture and institution; pay and benefits; and diversity and inclusion’. The Board had its own list: ‘recruitment and grading, performance management and professional development’¹²

Cambridge is in the midst of a continuing controversy about the future of its Employer Justified Retirement Age with wider concerns about its employment in general. Academic and Research Staff are now offered three ‘Career Pathways’. Scrutiny considered ‘People’, that is ‘staff recruitment and retention, diversity and inclusion, HR processes and the development of the University’s People Strategy’. It welcomes the introduction of a career path up to professor-level for people in teaching-focused roles via the Academic (Teaching and Scholarship) Pathway¹³ and more open-ended rather than fixed-term contracts for researchers.

The Board is less than congratulatory about ‘HR processes’, because it had ‘received concerns that the time taken to investigate and conclude staff complaints and grievance processes were unduly lengthy’. It noted that ‘the University is updating and streamlining its policy, with the aim to respond in a timely manner’.

This is not the only year in which the Board of Scrutiny has expressed concerns about the operation of the University’s governance, commenting that ‘the need to increase understanding between the central bodies and the Regent House is a hardy perennial’. This year its heading is ‘Governance needs more teeth’, with committees lacking bite. ‘The University governance structure is designed so that the University is run by committee, rather than individuals’:

‘The University does not have a Chief Executive Officer; in-

stead, the Vice-Chancellor chairs the Council, which is the principal executive and policy-making body of the University. Similarly, the Vice-Chancellor or the Pro-Vice-Chancellors chair the other key committees of the University, and it is those committees that make the decisions’.

It is critical that there is ‘insufficient challenge evidenced in the proceedings of University committees’:

‘In particular, during the year it was observed to the Board that a key committee seemed to have lost its centre of gravity, and appeared at times to be little more than box-ticking’.

It ‘gathers that the situation regarding that particular committee has significantly improved’, but sees a potential failure of governance:

‘If there is to be effective decision-making, there has to be informed and in-depth discussions at committee level, the committee papers need to clearly present options in digestible form, and there should be constructive challenge’.

Therefore ‘effective committees need to be critical friends to those tasked with presenting proposals and implementing decisions’.

The Board of Scrutiny is itself intent on being such a ‘critical friend’. Among its Recommendations are that the Review of Teaching should not be ‘simply warm words’, and reforms should not be conducted in a ‘piecemeal or siloed way without full assessment or mitigation of the consequences on other stakeholders in the University’. It calls for a ‘comprehensive update to the Regent House by July 2025 on progress towards the University’s environmental sustainability commitments, covering both academic and operational activities’. It recommends that ‘key committees such as the Estates Committee, Environmental Sustainability Strategy Committee, and Research Policy Committee’ would be required to ‘report to the Council on the progress they are making in supporting delivery towards the University’s commitments’.

It sees it as ‘a matter of urgency, that the University should better understand where there has been increased expenditure in the last decade, and why’ and when it has done that ‘closely consider a more strategic approach to implementing the interim 5% cut than “salami slicing”’. To that end it ‘recommends that structures and reporting lines in financial and administrative leadership be reviewed’. It would like to see the creation of a post of ‘Chief Operating Officer’.

Lastly it recommends that:

‘all proposals put to the Regent House (or other bodies) should be fully costed, with clarity as to where resources will come from, together with the value of benefits (and the implications of not accepting the proposal), the long-term aim being to embed a culture of financial control across the University.’

It approved the way that had been done for the vote on changes to the Employer Justified Retirement Age, when the *Reporter* ‘commendably listed the Review Group’s estimate of ‘approximately £7.4m a year’ in additional salary costs if the retirement age was scrapped, ‘compared to £2.2m if the EJRA is increased to 69’.

This concern with financial matters overlaps to some extent with the responsibilities of Cambridge’s separate

Audit Committee, which is another of the Committees of the Council with its own authority under Statute IV,⁷ and Special Ordinance A,V,¹³ with Statute F also covering Finance.¹⁴ ‘Audit’ like ‘Scrutiny’ has responsibility ‘for providing assurance that the University has in place’ not only ‘appropriate financial’ but also ‘governance management’ structures.

In due course Cambridge’s Council will publish its comments on the new *Scrutiny Report*. History suggests that its recommendations may need to be repeated before they are acted on, but Scrutiny is patient. It asks again, and if necessary again, and its requests tend to lead over time to the suggested change or reform. An example was Scrutiny’s repeated call for a review of the confused arrangement of the University’s Statutes and Ordinances which eventually took place between 2010 and 2012. In its *Fifteenth Report* Scrutiny welcomed:

‘the proposal to establish a Technical Advisory Group, also under the chairmanship of its own former Chairman, to recommend specific revisions and updates to Statutes, Ordinances, Orders, and other material within a comprehensive and comprehensible framework. The Board of Scrutiny has been advocating this course of action for several years and is strongly supportive of the initiative.’¹⁵

¹ Gazette, Supplement (1) to 5173, 21 June, 2017.

² <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/audit-and-scrutiny-committee-reports>

³ <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/audit-and-scrutiny-committee-reports>

⁴ <https://www.scrutiny.cam.ac.uk/membership>

⁵ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/cgi-bin/search.cgi>

⁶ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2024-25/weekly/6756/6756.pdf#page=10>

⁷ Reporter, 17 June, 1998, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2024-25/weekly/6756/6756.pdf#page=10>

⁸ Reporter, 24 January, 2024, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6726/section1.shtml#heading2-4>

⁹ Reporter, 8 November, 2023, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6717/section5.shtml>

¹⁰ The purpose of the UTO Scheme is to enable all Colleges to operate effectively in the educational field by ensuring a reasonable distribution of University Teaching Officers (UTOs) amongst them, <https://www.ois.cam.ac.uk/uto-scheme>.

¹¹ <https://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/category/justice4collegesupervisors/>

¹² Reporter, 29 November, 2023, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6720/section3.shtml#heading2-9>

¹³ Reporter, 24 March 2021, <https://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/category/justice4collegesupervisors/>

¹⁴ <https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/audit-committee/Pages/about.aspx>

¹⁵ Reporter, 21 July, 2010, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2009-10/weekly/6196/section6.shtml#heading2-33>

The editors invite and welcome contributions from all our readers. The content of Oxford Magazine relies largely on what arrives spontaneously on the editors’ desk and is usually published as received.

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Ben Bollig has stepped down as co-editor during his term as Assessor.

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University of Oxford's Chancellor election

The following notice was published by the University on 5th November. Attached are the personal statements of the five candidates (in alphabetical order) – ed.

Five candidates have now progressed to the second and final round of the election for the University of Oxford's next Chancellor's election.

The five candidates are: Lady Elish Angiolini, Rt Hon Dominic Grieve, Lord William Hague, Lord Peter Mandelson and Baroness Jan Royall.

Over 23,000 members of Convocation, consisting of staff and University alumni, cast their votes online in the first round of the election after 38 candidates applied for the role and expressed their interest through personal statements. In the first round, voters had the opportunity to rank as many candidates as they chose. Votes were then counted by an independent service provider, Civica Election Services.

The second round of voting will take place in the week commencing 18 November. Following that, the successor to Lord Patten, Oxford's former Chancellor who retired at the end of Trinity Term 2024, will be announced in the week of 25 November.

The Chancellor is the titular head of Oxford University and presides over several key ceremonies. The Chancellor also chairs the Committee to Elect the Vice-Chancellor. In addition to these formal duties, the Chancellor undertakes advocacy, advisory and fundraising work, acting as an ambassador for the University at a range of national and international events. The post has been occupied at Oxford since 1224, exactly 800 years.

The incoming Chancellor will be in post for a fixed term of no more than 10 years in accordance with amendments to University statutes enacted earlier this year.

Lady Elish Angiolini

The Chancellor is the University's symbolic leader, and I believe that this combination of symbolism and leadership has never been more important than it is today. Our University is a beacon of hope in a polarised world; a byword for excellence across the globe. The extraordinary work that happens here – in teaching rooms, lecture halls, laboratories, and libraries – furthers the material, cultural, and moral welfare of all humanity. Our University's academic mission demands the highest commitment and devotion from its leaders.

For the past thirteen years I have witnessed Oxford's world-leading research helping to protect against illness; break down cultural barriers; alleviate suffering; illuminate history; promote international development; and ease deprivation. I have seen first-hand the truly international scope and reach of what we do, and of who we are.

I joined the University in 2012 when I became Principal of St Hugh's College. Although I am a late arrival compared with many, I quickly came to view it not only with respect but with affection, and I feel it has warmly embraced me in turn. Both College and University have instilled in me a deep admiration for our academic mission and provided a community within which my husband and I have been able to raise our family while delighting in Oxford's academic, pastoral, and cultural life.

More than any other institution I know, Oxford is truly multigenerational, a compact between those yet to arrive, our existing scholars, and our alumni, stretching back through almost ten centuries of history and reaching forward to those not yet born. I have watched with hope our new matriculants arrive to begin their Oxford journeys each Michaelmas; looked on with pride as our finalists leave to continue those journeys in the wider world each Trinity; and celebrated with the graduands and alumni who return every year to renew their connections to our College and University. We shape – and are shaped by – all who pass through our halls.

I have also witnessed first-hand the skill and grace with which our current Chancellor, the Lord Patten of Barnes, has helped us navigate both success and challenge with equanimity. He has elevated the profile of our already distinguished institution, and it is with more than a modicum of nervousness that I hope to follow in his footsteps and build on his illustrious legacy.

The appointment of the next Chancellor is a momentous decision requiring consideration of candidates' leadership qualities, vision for the future, and alignment with the values and traditions of this great University. It comes at a crucial moment in the University's ongoing story, and calls for a profound understanding of how Oxford's distinctive history can be reconciled with the changing imperatives of the modern world without sacrificing our unique institutional qualities.

While our University's history is set, our future must be shaped by each generation, and I believe that the challenges and opportunities of the coming years will be some of the most important we have ever faced. Through all of this, our purpose remains clear: to attract the most brilliant students, tutors, and researchers from across the world, and to maintain an environment in which they can fulfil their intellectual, social, and personal potential. I hope, by example, to continue to make my own small contribution to that noble aim.

I am the Principal of St Hugh's College and have been Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. I will retire from St Hugh's next year.

I grew up in Govan, Glasgow and qualified as a lawyer in 1983. After a career as a public prosecutor, I became Solicitor General for Scotland in 2001 and Lord Advocate in 2011. In 2023, His Majesty the King appointed me to the office of Lord Clerk Register.

I have chaired a number of public inquiries and I pub-

lished Part One of my report of the Inquiry into the Murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer earlier this year. Part Two of the Inquiry is underway.

Throughout my career, I have focused on protecting the most vulnerable in society, particularly women and children, from the use and abuse of power. I have proudly served as the senior Law Officer to governments from across the UK's political spectrum.

I humbly submit my application to be the next Chancellor of this extraordinary institution.

Rt Hon Dominic Grieve KC

My career has been at the intersection of Law and politics. I held the office of Attorney General, the principal legal adviser to the UK government from 2010-14, and served as a Member of Parliament for twenty two years 1997-2019, with four years as chair of its Intelligence and Security Committee. My ties to Oxford began with my undergraduate years at Magdalen and were among the most positive experiences of my life, for which I am grateful. I visit Oxford often and take part in some of its academic activities. Recently I was the Reviewer of the Governance of Christ Church Oxford. Contacts with the University have increased my respect and affection for it. It is an institution with a rich history and immense capability for good, both domestically and internationally. As Chancellor, I can help represent the University, enhance its success and contribute to its further development and well-being. I would consider it a great privilege to do so and to give something back for what I have received.

At 68 and still scuba diving and mountain walking, I am confident that I have the energy to do this. I have the time to perform the duties that fall on the Chancellor. My home is in London so I will be readily accessible and available for all the ceremonial functions required, which I will enjoy. More general participation in the life of the University will be easy for me. My experience can provide supportive advice and advocacy for the decision makers of the University, the Vice Chancellor, Council and Congregation. Most of my career has been spent in the art of persuasion and reconciling different viewpoints as well as chairing meetings. As Attorney General I superintended and represented the interests in government of the Crown Prosecution Service whilst respecting and protecting the independence of its decisions. In reviewing the governance of Christ Church I worked in an advisory role for its Governing Body to find practical solutions. In the process I had to get a good understanding of the governance issues facing the University more generally. I am currently on the board of trustees of several charities and chair of one of them and am familiar with the requirements of good charitable governance. This will enable me to carry out effectively the role of Visitor, if necessary, to those colleges whose statutes place this duty on the Chancellor. My involvement with charities has given me experience with the challenges of fundraising and I see helping the University with this as a key part of the role.

Oxford, along with other universities, is navigating its way through a period of change and opportunity. Supporting its development as a centre of research and teaching excellence open to all who can benefit and con-

tribute to it, upholding academic freedom, embracing diversity in all its forms, will be another important part of the role, as will be acting as its advocate to government and others. My extensive experience working on diversity, interfaith and human rights issues is directly relevant. I have provided mentoring and work experience to young people of diverse backgrounds through Operation Black Vote and the Faith and Belief Forum. I contribute to the fellowship programme on ethics in public service of the Westminster Abbey Institute and the Young Muslim Leadership Course at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, of which I am an independent trustee. I am a practising member of the Church of England. I am committed to the principles underpinning human rights, equality and the right to freedom of expression under law and with civility, essential to a place of learning.

I am no longer affiliated to any political Party and have worked co-operatively on a cross-party basis with members of the present UK government and others in British politics, I believe I will be listened to as an advocate for the University to government and Parliament. As a government minister and parliamentary committee chair, I have done diplomatic networking in Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East. I am partly of French heritage and bilingual. I will be pleased to travel and represent the University abroad to further its interests and am very much at ease in and enjoy diverse environments.

If anyone is interested in further information on my candidacy, it can be found on <https://www.dominic4oxford.com>

Lord William Hague

Oxford transformed my life. When I arrived as a 17-year-old from a comprehensive school for an interview at Magdalen, I didn't know a single person in the whole city, and no one in my family had ever been to university. I have never forgotten how Oxford equipped me to take on any challenge in the world.

I have maintained a strong connection to the university ever since. In 1988 I volunteered, through my then employers McKinsey, to advise the university on its desperate needs for funds and plans for an appeal. With an American colleague I presented a plan, not for an appeal but for a Campaign for Oxford, not to raise £50 million as was mooted but £380 million, not to stave off a crisis but to fill much needed posts, renovate buildings, offer scholarships and build for the future, which I am delighted it has gone on to do.

While standing before the heads of the colleges persuading them to share data on their alumni with the university and writing the first draft of a publication I called 'Oxford Today', I could see that one of the world's greatest universities, with a momentous past, has a great future when we all work together. More recently, as an Honorary Fellow of Magdalen I have spent time with undergraduates who are that future, as I have returned regularly to give seminars or lectures on politics or the biographies I have written.

If Oxford asks me to serve as Chancellor, I will embrace that with vigour – although if there are better candidates they should be chosen, and I would strongly

support them. In the 42 years since I graduated, I have built relationships across government, diplomacy, literature, science, business and philanthropy. I am ready to open their doors in the service of the university I love.

While parliament has been a big part of my life, I have always striven to reach beyond politics to promote diversity and work across parties. That was true of my proudest legislative achievement, the Disability Discrimination Act, and of my co-founding with Angelina Jolie of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, and of my current work as chair of the Royal Foundation of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Core to my beliefs is the need for strong and enduring institutions, as vital bulwarks in the turbulent age now unfolding. As Foreign Secretary, while dealing with crises in the Middle East and Africa, I also created a language school in Whitehall and founded a Diplomatic Academy.

Much of the Chancellor's role is fundraising, ceremonial, or representing the values of the university. I have secured large donations for many causes, speech-making is in my nature and I am not averse to wearing robes. We must embrace modernity while treasuring our history. But it is also vital to give a lead when necessary, keeping the potential of great universities at the heart of public policy. There are at least three major issues for the next decade on which a Chancellor can help.

One is freedom of speech. Oxford should be a place of open debate – as it was for me in the Union – based on learning from the arguments of others. Violence and prejudice should be countered through the rigour of reason, not the comfort blanket of cancellation. Oxford minds should be ready for the great debating chamber of the world, not the echo chambers of the like-minded. I applaud Chris Patten's clear statements on this vital matter.

Second is how the state finances universities. Britain is heading for a crisis over higher education funding. Solutions will be needed, from successive governments, that are affordable to the next generation of students regardless of background.

Third is the need for the UK and its universities to be at the forefront of the fastest period of change in science and technology in the entire history of human civilisation. That is not just a challenge for scientists but for every branch of humanities, medicine and social science too. The recent papers I have co-authored with Tony Blair set out how the country is well-placed but needs to do more, making the most of extraordinary talent in our research, funding it, and welcoming it from all over the globe.

My heart and soul are in Oxford, and if I can help ensure future 17-year-olds have the same opportunity as I did, I offer my service. My website, william Hague.com provides details of my books, articles, interests and past career.

Lord Peter Mandelson

The world we live in is more fractious and challenging than I have ever known. Science, expertise and dialogue are being attacked. Defending Oxford and its commitment to advancing knowledge is more important than ever.

I learned as an undergraduate that progress comes

from testing ideas based on rational thought including its ethical considerations. I believe in freedom of expression and in tolerance and respect for others' views. Freedom of speech, although uncomfortable for many of us at times, is fundamental to university life and we must continue to uphold it.

I am putting my name forward as Chancellor following Chris Patten's very successful tenure as I am passionately committed to Oxford, its values, its collegiate system and its remarkable teaching and path-breaking research.

The role of Chancellor is largely ceremonial but also advisory and the Chancellor needs to contribute to the cohesion of the collegiate University including its academic divisions and departments. As an ambassador for the University at home and abroad I would always want to project the University's educational purpose and our understanding of our common humanity, its history and languages, its art and literature.

I benefitted from a state education and was the first in my school and my family to win a place at Oxford. Like thousands of other students, I vividly remember the excitement and trepidation of my first term. I want to see the University continue to attract and welcome the widest possible pool of applicants, from all types of school, while ensuring that Oxford's commitment to excellence is paramount.

In recent years my love of Oxford has made me a frequent visitor, and I have supported the University through my interest in technological innovation and its commercialisation and as a board member of the Ertegun graduate scholarship programme which seeks to create leaders in humanities. If elected I will take great pride in advancing the interests of the University and serving the whole of Oxford's collegiate community for the coming decade.

As I argued when minister for universities in the last Labour government, Britain's national prosperity requires a thriving university sector. I believe that higher education is an essential public investment and I am against the disproportionate shifting of costs onto individual students. I believe this view is shared by the new UK government including the Prime Minister and I will use my longstanding political links to advocate for this approach. But at the same time, as times are tight, the University will also have to raise more money from our worldwide alumni and from philanthropists.

Everything we do must ensure we remain a top-ranking global university, able to attract the very best staff and students. In today's world, an institution's glorious history does not guarantee it can remain ahead in the future. In the USA and increasingly elsewhere, competing universities enjoy huge endowments and philanthropy, enabling them to spend more money on staff, scholarships, post docs and facilities. To help the University, I would be able to draw on my extensive international networks created over three decades as UK Trade and Industry and later Business Secretary and First Secretary of State, as the EU's Trade Commissioner, and as co-founder and chair of the policy advisory firm Global Counsel. As Chancellor, I would put these links at the service of the University, to help rebuild our ties in Europe as well as strengthen them in the US and Asia.

The traditions of the University should continue to anchor us in our long, unique history. While respecting

Oxford's extraordinary legacy, the Chancellor should be part of the conversation about the University's future, at a time when the impact of Brexit and past government policies have been very harmful to higher education. I would bring a clear sense of strategy and political judgement, an unwavering commitment to enhance the work and amplify the voice of the University's world class academics, and a proven ability to engage with British and global policy makers, as well as with business and philanthropists.

After a career in government and business, I want to give back to the University that has given me so much and to support the Vice-Chancellor and her team, as well as all of Oxford's 39 colleges. I sincerely hope I have the chance to serve Oxford's extraordinarily talented staff, students and alumni, no doubt with the same excitement and sense of anticipation I had when I first came up to the university, though now better equipped to help the whole university succeed.

Baroness Jan Royall

Oxford is a great University and I am proud of being part of this global community of academics, scholars, researchers, students and alumni; proud to have played my part in the University Council and as chair of the Conference of Colleges. My experience as former Leader of the House of Lords was invaluable, bringing together differing voices across the collegiate University for the common good.

As Principal of Somerville College, I live and breathe Oxford. I have a deep, contemporary understanding of the University and its needs – along with the drive, dedication and deep experience of public life to serve as its Chancellor.

In an era of unprecedented challenges, when disinformation, divisive discourse and rapid technological change all impinge drastically on the higher education landscape, the University needs a Chancellor who can support the excellent Vice Chancellor navigate these. The University is founded on tolerance. At Somerville, I have relished the opportunity to lead a college where students, academics, and support staff flourish in an atmosphere of respect. The unique, but fragile, tutorial system is special, a model of dialectical teaching which fosters the free and enlightened discourse crucial to our liberal, democratic society. These are principles that I have defended and espoused in Government and around the world.

The higher education system is under great strain. Oxford and its Chancellor must be part of finding sustainable solutions for the sector. While we are more fortunate than most – thanks to our outstanding research, partnerships and strong endowments – we must raise more money if we are to fulfil our research and academic mission now and in the future.

Philanthropy is key for the growth and wellbeing of the University. I have direct experience of this at Somerville. I have successfully engaged our alumni, and supporters who are not Oxonians, recently securing an eight figure major gift from a philanthropist who champions our values and purpose.

Funding is needed to support our people and their work, and to open a pipeline for new talent and ideas – in every discipline including in the humanities where graduate scholarships have declined exponentially. I

celebrate the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, a great testament to the University's recognition that the humanities are the basis of civilisation.

Finance should never be a barrier to education. I regret that my own teachers told me this was not the place for me, a first-generation student. Education is transformational. Every young person with the academic potential should be given the confidence and opportunity to apply to Oxford, a place where they can belong. We have made huge strides at Somerville in widening participation, welcoming and supporting students wherever they come from. I am particularly proud of having catalysed our recognition as the first College of Sanctuary, subsequently followed by the University's own sanctuary status.

I share the Vice Chancellor's belief that we should think globally and act locally. Understanding that the University and city are mutually dependent, I co-founded the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership, bringing together the University, employers, business, education and community groups to create a more equal and sustainable region.

The collegiate system is complex but thanks to chairing the Conference of Colleges, I understand the dynamics. With complexity comes tension but in Oxford, as when Leader of the House of Lords, I have established a model of inclusive leadership and consensus-building around progressive values that has created significant impact in both spheres.

These are testing times in a fast-changing world. Oxford must retain and enhance its global, national and local reputation. What a joy for the Chancellor to be its strongest advocate! I would be an ambassador for the amazing researchers whose brilliant minds are addressing the world's greatest challenges and opportunities: in cyber security; antimicrobial resistance; AI; governance; energy; food security; the climate crisis and more – driving the economic growth which is crucial for national prosperity. And what a duty for that Chancellor to bring together disparate voices behind a common interest, to secure the University's academic and financial future, and safeguard all that we hold dear about Oxford.

I did not have the good fortune to come to Oxford University as a student, but having embraced its traditions I am passionate about its future possibilities – as a confident, forward-looking institution, based on world-beating research and exceptional people. It would be an honour to support the Vice Chancellor and entire University navigate the challenges ahead, and make sure we continue to be the standard bearer of brilliance and distinction in the future.

The University has declined to publish the earlier voting figures for these candidates.

Last week's Gazette published these candidates statements as a Flysheet, accompanied by the following:

statements provided by the 5 candidates for the role of Chancellor of the University of Oxford who are going forward to the second round of voting (word limit: 750). Candidates' names and statements are listed here in alphabetical order, but will be presented to the electorate in random order when voting. The candidates' statements of interest have been reproduced exactly as submitted. Their words and views are their own; no changes or edits have been made beyond those requested by the candidates themselves. The candidates' statements do not reflect the opinions of the University of Oxford, and the University cannot guarantee their factual accuracy.

From Gerbils to Alligators: how the Trump Parousia might save Oxford

DON CARLETON

The greatest storms can start in almost imperceptible ways. A vastly destructive tempest with an impact that might last half a century can be signalled by the arrival of a little cloud no bigger than a man's hand in an otherwise clear, untroubled blue sky. The present financial plight of the universities began thus, not with a cloud but the arrival of a gerbil.

When Mrs Thatcher asked Ken Baker to come up with a plan for the reform of education, he responded with the Gerbil (the Great Education Reform Bill of 1988). For schools, the Gerbil introduced a National Curriculum. A child whose parental employment required a move from Bodmin to Berwick-on-Tweed would be taught the same subjects in broadly the same way with no need for major adjustments. That was, perhaps, a worthy achievement. The universities were not so fortunate. The 'Gerbil' mood in Government abolished the University Grants Committee and replaced it with a Higher Education Funding Council for England. Worse, Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer introduced a national research selectivity exercise. By the time Mrs Thatcher left office, the direction of university teaching and research had fallen into the hands of central bodies and students had started to pay tuition fees.

The level was initially set at £1000. That subsequently advanced to £3290. It didn't seem to matter all that much, but the great international financial storm of 2007 changed that perception. The Brown Government coped by reducing state funding of the universities and making them much more dependent on the income derived from fees. That action revealed a great and harmful truth. For centuries, students had come to the universities as a personal commitment. They were seeking ways of exploring the nature of the world and new ideas about the learning of the past. It was a way of finding themselves. Having to borrow money to pay fees they could not otherwise afford, they still made a personal commitment, but it was no longer an intellectual matter. The Gerbil had made it a personal financial investment. Students were then, and now are, looking for a way of funding themselves.

Students have become consumers with contractual consumer rights. Their debts force them to seek long-term social and financial advantage as an undeclared objective of their degree and university choice. The financial pressures on the universities make them complicit in that essentially corrupt and corrosive bargain.

As the system developed, the existential financial pressure became exerted and enhanced by the OfS, and by teaching and research assessments developed from the Swinnerton-Dyer heresy. If universities wished to survive, they had to play this game. They were forced to maintain armies of administrators to compile statistics on which specious and irrelevant central decisions and judgments by central bodies were to be based. Teaching was homogenized into a national curriculum of method.

University teachers could not resist. Students were customers and they were customers who were always right. Badges and emblems of honour and published 'ratings' were assigned – often to loud approbation from news and social media – to the institutions who best conformed to the new regime. The lack of true agency in teaching and research did not matter. The Government of the day controlled how universities operated. Our new Labour Government, for example, has just announced that there is to be a new higher cap for student fees. It is supposed to cope with inflation in costs.¹

But that same Government has also just announced new increased payments for National Insurance (NI) for all employees to be paid by the employer. Universities employ thousands of people. The increase in fees will be used to pay the new higher bills for NI. The Government giveth and the Government taketh away. The sin is not peculiar to Labour. Governments of all stripes create costs and don't provide money to pay for them. As far as universities are concerned, the new Labour cap doesn't fit, and we can't wear it. What can be done? Is there light in this darkness?

Well, say not the struggle not availeth. Westward, look, the sky is bright. Donald Trump has been elected to serve again as President of the United States of America. His name is not one that has much currency in academic circles, but adversity makes strange bedfellows. Trump thinks Washington (like Whitehall) is full of unnecessary civil servants and bureaucrats administering pointless agencies who declare their existence by initials. We all know what that looks like at the university level too.

Being a great popular communicator, Trump does not speak of 'Civil Service reform', or 'reassessment of bureaucratic needs'. He has told the American people that Washington is a swamp full of alligators and that he will drain the swamp. Allegorical alligators, however, are wicked animals. If you attack them, they defend themselves. There will be a contest. To deal with that situation, Trump has chosen Elon Musk.

Mr Musk is an interesting man, ideally suited to the President's task. He has become very rich because he has shown time after time that he could find an idea, recruit a team to explore and understand it, and come up with a practical way of using it. For example, he decided to work on space vehicles. He invented (or found people to invent for him) a way of launching a space vehicle which not only returned to Earth the crew capsule but the launch vehicle as well. The financial savings are enormous. All the teams in his enterprises are remarkably small. That may be his greatest genius – to achieve complex aims involving novel systems and exploiting new concepts with dedicated teams who require minimal administration. In short, Musk and his companies now carry out extraor-

dinarily well the role traditionally performed by universities.

As he sets himself to trim the American government machine, it may be that he will find concepts that could be applied internationally, not least to solving the financial and governance problems of Britain's universities. He might even 'make Academe great again'. How will that be done? Let us see what Musk can offer. New academic governing bodies perhaps ('muskrats' to overcome 'gerbils')? But we might make our own start – initially as it were – by removing the OfS, and its satellites and return to the remit of the pre-Gerbil, alligator-free, small, low cost, and, on the whole, efficient *UGC (1919-1989)*: 'To enquire into the needs of University education ...and to advise as to the application of any grants made by Parliament towards meeting them'.²

¹ The cap may be unlawful. The mathematics are complex and vary across subjects, but if we use rounded up figures and make some broad assumptions, it appears that 'tuition fees' applied only to tuition (staff student ratios, contact hours, preparation time, marking and assessment, pastoral care, record keeping for teaching assessments) fall far below the permitted hourly minimum wage after the core costs of providing buildings and equipment are deducted.

² There will be scepticism about what may be achieved. If that is the case, perhaps we might look again at the Government of William Pitt the Younger. It was greeted with derision. No one thought it would last, and all believed that it would be ineffectual. The very first item on Pitt's agenda was a whiskey tax, a version of which provided the first state support for universities a hundred years later. And that support created a golden age of British universities measured not by quangos and a deep but artificial care for student feelings but by the award of Nobel Prizes and for world leading useful ideas. Our own MAGA is possible.

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present ("on the floor") at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>

Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.

The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.

Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).

The editors invite and welcome contributions from all our readers.
The content of Oxford Magazine relies largely on what arrives spontaneously on
the editors' desk and is usually published as received.

Our contact address is: tim.horder@dpag.ox.ac.uk

Ben Bollig has stepped down as co-editor during his term as Assessor.

A Quartet for the End of our Time

In memory of Colin Macleod (1943-1981)

I Poetry of Vision and Poetry of Experience : *allegretto ma non troppo*

Golden cockerel or blast-beruffled thrush:
one built from anecdote propped by apophthegm
(‘What will survive ...’ ‘some blessed hope’ ... ‘we should be kind...’)
the other with breathless hierophantic hush
(indignant vultures scorning the common petal)...
I see you crouched on the sunlit hill of youth
plant-book in hand, studying a red dead-nettle
or humble bugloss with the same hunger for truth
you brought to *Antigone* or a Murolo song.
But what you foresaw bred horror – vision was doom,
experience death: you could not stand to find
how deep our days would sink, into what mire.
Wrongly you chose, though you did not choose wrong:
Your *schwergefasste Entschluss* stings like fire.

II Louange de l’amitié des âmes : *adagio con affetto*

‘Experience and vision can be atoned,’ I contend.
‘In the best things, they are; the dance and dancer?’
And roll back sixty summers to remember how
you asked with a smile, when you first knocked one night,
the pleasure of my conversation; the greatest compliment
anyone has ever paid me. But say we had met
in that bleak slough of aimless discontent
where concord flowered from disabled wood and string,
would you have bidden me help him tangle his sounds?
‘You have a voice: use it to sing my plight.’
‘The sharp end of your time?’ ‘Make that your song.’

Philía, rather: the musical marriage of minds
that have cast out fear of stumbling over the loose
shingle of doubt and razor-shell resentment.
Acids of Eros bite to the blackest state:
desire shrivelling, spousal envy abrades
the sores of unspoken hurt and banked suspicion:
‘Why are you always like this? What did I say?’
Lovers who do not reach the end as friends
sink in ennui, sly harbinger of hate.
You waged my work, poured wine at my success,
laughed at my pains; but never in the wrong way.

III The Helplessness of Unbelief : *allegro alla marcia*

I knew a man in my life who was gravely just
to everyone but himself, loyal as sunrise,
but wouldn’t wait to endure his going hence
and drew his breath in pain for the final verse.
A hand in need, ear of my insolent seed-time,
keeping cold vigil over the locust’s harvest
that comes up bare as a bodkin – has come, will come.

Si quis sentiret unde veniret

Fondly wilful where he was sagely calm,
I drew up from morning’s freshness, from midnight joy –
the daily things one does, but those things (however
grudgingly done) halved with a handfast other.
The quotidian’s no more common when failure is shared:
what fled with hope through his parting fingers was love,
Philía, *agápe*, what so you wish to name it ...

et quo tendit nunquam gauderet

What nameless pang untimely ripped his spirit?
Unchildedness in a world unfit for children,
womb-twin who perished – survivor’s guilt, more bitter?
All I see now through time’s inverted eyeglass
is a far image, small but sharply focussed,
not turning round to signal a goodbye,
but lying prone till the thunder swallows him up...

sed semper fleret. What then but *vigilemus*

when four loved cities in the infested air –
the serene, the steepled, the resanctified, the eternal –
cringe from the hosts, each spire like a lost cause,
the fishless rivers fret at unyielding banks,
eviscerate plums ooze yellow on bitten stalks?
Tempora pessima. Fiddle your decreation,
world-rulers: look on your opera and rejoice.

IV The Latemost Day : *largo e maestoso*

Veniam tamquam fur

And when he comes (will come, has come) on a spring day
of sun-baffling mist and chill intermittent wind
will spectral horns blare the expected end,
abysmal eruptions fling blackness over the earth,
or a diffuse ashen luminosity
hover, preceded by an inaudible sennet,
no frenzy of cymbals, no hiss of the sky’s division,
but an indented crosslet of pulsing crimson
to brand each spirit in its bewildered minute,
forcing the will to pull down its vanity,
darkened Megiddo to double its defensible girth,
her archons incontinently to comprehend
that poetry makes nothing happen for the blind,
being airy nothing, and nothing will happen this way?

CARL SCHMIDT

Title: after Olivier Messiaen’s *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, composed 1941 in Hut 27B of the prison camp *Stalag VIII-A* at Görlitz. I Roberto Murolo (1912-2003), Neapolitan singer. *Schwergefasste Entschluss* ‘The hard-won conclusion’ (Beethoven, Op. 135, motto to 4th movement). II ‘Praise of the friendship of souls’. III Title: from *Poems* (1983) by Colin Macleod (Tutor in Classics at Christ Church, Oxford, 1969-81), p.105; womb-twin: *idem*, p.96. *Si quis... fleret*: ‘If you knew whence you came and where you are going, you would never rejoice but always weep;’ from Trinity College Cambridge MS 895, f. 1r. *Tempora... vigilemus*: ‘[the last hour], the worst of times; let us keep watch’ (Bernard of Cluny). *Veniam...*: ‘I come as a thief’ (Rev 16:15; cf. I Thess 5:2, II Pet 3:10). Megiddo: Zech 12:11; cf. Rev 16:16.

Carl Schmidt was formerly Senior English Tutor and is now Emeritus Fellow at Balliol College, Oxford. His last book was *Passion and Precision: Collected Essays on English Poetry from Geoffrey Chaucer to Geoffrey Hill* (2015).

South Park

If you should chance a gentle climb
across ground that is sometimes boggy
marked by the glare of rockets
churned by the tramp of many boots
at others hospitable and firm
with the brace of the first frost
or the glare of the Indian summer

Squeezing in by the scholar's gate
prised open by those indolent creatures
who found themselves on the wrong side
of the Park
coming from Magdalen
and couldn't be arsed to walk all the way around
(and if that isn't the story, hold hard because I like my version)

And keeping your eyes fixed forward
on your destination
a small bench at the top of a small hill;

If you should chance the gentle climb
in the brisk air of a morning dark
dropping those late lamented years as you go
we shed as we pick up, of course
but those we pick up are of a lighter, gentler, kinder, sort
wafted your way by the soft airs of centuries of youth¹
which so peculiarly impresses in this city
of Dreaming Spires²

Was ever the sky so tall again, as it was when you lay on the
grass
launching little white wings over the green
and was that green ever as close again, as it was when you
laughed and played
without a care in the world
neither bills, nor paper, nor the frown of a peevish master
in those dark-roomed towns³

When at last you gain the summit
you may find ahead but a hint of dawn
and think your journey should have been in vain:
but turn, and
ye shall see the truth the poet spake:
'Westward, look, the land is bright'.⁴

ALEXANDER YEN

¹ Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*.

² Arnold, 'Thyrsis'.

³ Barnes, 'My Orchard in Linden Lea'.

⁴ Clough, 'Say not the Struggle nought Availeth'.

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Having been at Oxford since he was an undergraduate, he enjoys walking in
the city and exploring the sights the English countryside has to offer.

The next issue of Oxford Magazine will appear in eighth week

Broken Governance, Hollow Degrees

Sir – An indicative episode dating from mid-summer 2024 which has hitherto failed to attract your attention is the palaver over Statute XI, on Student Discipline. A text of some 20 pages was first passed through Council without significant discussion. When a small group of academic staff objected to some clauses, Wellington Square hastened to produce a substantially revised (and slightly shorter) draft, with revisions indicated, for formal approval by Congregation in June. A review committee has now been set up.

Student discipline, including the ultimate sanction of expulsion from the University, may occasionally involve non-academic considerations. Usually, however, the grounds have been academic. In any case, a student's tutors always need to be involved, as sources of factual evidence and/or of pleas in mitigation. The way in which formulation of the current Statute has hitherto been undertaken, with no systematic procedure whatever, let alone consultation across the academic community, highlights two things in the starkest possible manner.

First, the University's system of governance is utterly broken.

Secondly, policy-creep is now ensuring that no student admitted to any of the University's taught courses can be either expelled on academic grounds in mid-course or judged unqualified at the end of the course to receive the corresponding degree. The default position is that academic requirements imposed on a student are to be adapted, i.e. reduced, on health or similar grounds. And of course nobody need know, because the beneficiary's privacy is protected – that being a farce in its own right: examination results have historically been public documents, and should have remained so.

This is no longer a source only of parochial academic distress. It has become a matter of public concern and mockery. *Private Eye* magazine, no less, on p.28 of No. 1633 (10th October 2024) offered a sample 2024 Finals Paper:

"Question 1. Would you like a first-class degree? a. Yes b. OK c. Alright. Simply circle one of the answers above and hand your paper in. Time allowed: 3 hours. If you require extra time, please ask an invigilator. If you do not know what "invigilator" means, do not worry, just hold your hand up and someone will come over and help."

Two weeks later a weightier magazine, *The Spectator*, carried reports from Oxbridge academic sources about the inability or unwillingness of to-day's students to fulfil reading and essay-writing assignments. The article by David Butterfield from Cambridge included the following:

"Many students are now excused from writing essays and permitted to submit bullet points; deadlines are extended, and reg-

TO THE EDITOR

ularly missed without penalty; extra time is given for all examinations..... The result is a steady infantilization of education, whereby challenging work-loads are reduced, and robust criticism of bad writing and bad thinking is avoided. And now there is the prospect of the intense eight-week term being divided in two by a 'recovery week'."

Returning to face facts at Oxford, it is surely time, after more than two decades of mounting evidence, for the University to acknowledge the truth: its present machinery of governance is, slowly but surely, depressing academic standards for the sake of administrative convenience. The damage dates, of course, from adoption of the North Commission's blundering report in the late 1990s.

The task now is hugely demanding – not merely to restore policy-making powers to the academic grass-roots (faculty boards etc.) where they previously resided, but to do so in the face of rigid vested interests in Wellington Square. Clear-sighted and determined academic leadership is required.

Yours sincerely,
PETER OPPENHEIMER
Christ Church

Critical thought re Israel

Sir – In his letter on Oxford colloquia (*Oxford Magazine*, No 469, 2nd week, MT 2024) Don Carleton refers in passing to the Middle East and gives us the following anecdote:

'If I have my dates right, in 1901 Chaim Weizmann told the Zionist Conference, "I have seen the bride (Palestine). She is beautiful, but she is married to another man".'

Mr Carleton adds: 'That is the nub of the problem right there.' The general idea is that the early Zionists knew perfectly well that the land where they were hoping to found a Jewish homeland already belonged by rights to others. A surprising fact, you might think.

There are several versions of this story. The statement attributed by Mr Carleton to Chaim Weizmann (1901) is also found attributed to two Viennese rabbis (1897), or to a Polish Jew (the 1920s). In one telling, the two rabbis have been sent by Weizmann himself. No primary sources have ever been cited as evidence for this tale, and the Viennese rabbis and the Polish Jew all remain stubbornly anonymous. Shai Afsai, who

has thoroughly investigated the sources and transmission of the story, writes:

*'Disputes involving the Land of Israel/Palestine are complex enough without introducing such fables into the mix.'*¹

I am inclined to agree.
Mr Carleton writes:

'The task of the University... is to challenge orthodoxies and disturb commonly held erroneous ideas. Critical thought, and the means to verify it, are essential components.'

With this too I am inclined to agree. Critical thought, and the means to verify it – plus, I would add, a nose for the implausible – should help us to avoid fables altogether.

Yours sincerely,
ROGER TEICHMANN
St Hilda's College

¹<https://fathomjournal.org/the-bride-is-beautiful-but-she-is-married-to-another-man-the-tenacity-of-an-anti-zionist-fable/>

Labour's Tuition Fee increase

Sir – First the bad news – the extra on employer-NI will cost a larger Oxford college £200k (call it 'a') or more annually, especially if the college is mimicking the University's "Oxford University Weighting" and the extra increment for its Tutorial Fellows (as, it is assumed almost all will do).

And then the good news? – the annual tuition fee for a UK undergraduate increases to just above £9500 from £9250. A college's share of that via the JRAM is c£140 so a larger Oxford college will see an increase of, say, £40k (call it 'b').

So, a – b = something like a £160k extra loss for the bottom-line of a larger college which might or might not be able to be covered from Endowment draw-down and/or conference earnings and/or whatever – and 'whatever' could include shifting from UK undergraduates earning a college c£5k via the JRAM to international fees undergraduates earning the college c£18k.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID PALFREYMAN
New College

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NOTICE

Jane Griffiths, literary editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, will be pleased to read literary submissions of any description—e.g. verse, critical prose, very short stories, segments of dialogue, reviews of new dramatic productions and books, etc. Submissions should be no longer than 750 words, and where possible should be sent by email attachment to jane.griffiths@ell.ox.ac.uk together with a two-sentence biog.

Not the *Gazette*

N.B. The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

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